

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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INT-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-03 SAM-01 OES-05

SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 FRB-01 PA-02 USIA-15

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ENRG, SENV, CA

SUBJ: MACKENZIE VALLEY GAS PIPELINE; BERGER COMMISSION

INQUIRY

1. IN COMMONS QUESTION PERIOD OF MARCH 3, ACTING PRIME MINISTER SHARP WAS REPEATEDLY AND EXTENSIVELY QUESTIONED ABOUT RELATIONSHIP OF BERGER COMMISSION INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF MACKENZIE VALLEY GAS PIPELINE PROPOSAL TO EVENTUAL GOC DECISION ON WHETHER OR NOT TO PROCEED WITH THE PROJECT.

2. SHARP SAID HE WOULD "HESITATE TO GIVE A CATEGORICAL REPLY" TO A REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE THAT THE GOC WOULD NOT RPT NOT PROCEED WITH THE PIPELINE CONSTRUCTION PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF THE BERGER REPORT AND ALSO SAID THAT NO ONE SHOULD DRAW THE CONCLUSION THAT THE GOC HAS ALREADY DECIDED THAT THE GAS PIPELINE IS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST. SHARP DID STATE THE FOLLOWING, HOWEVER:

BEGIN QUOTE.

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IT IS OUR HOPE THAT MR. JUSTICE BERGER WILL BRING DOWN HIS REPORT IN TIME FOR IT TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN WE RECEIVE A RECOMMENDATION FROM THE NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD. IF IT SHOULD BE A RECOMMENDATION TO PROCEED WITH THE BUILDING OF THE PIPELINE, I COULD IMAGINE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT MIGHT BE DESIRABLE TO HAVE SOME CONSULTATIONS WITH MR. JUSTICE BERGER ABOUT THE NATURE OF HIS REPORT, IF IT APPEARED THAT THE TIME HE WAS GOING TO TAKE WOULD BE SO LONG AS TO INTERFERE WITH WHAT WAS CONSIDERED TO BE A VERY DESIRABLE DECISION. END QUOTE.

3. ENERGY MINISTER MACDONALD, IN SAME COMMONS SESSION, STATED THAT "CERTAINLY OUR OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO HAVE MR. JUSTICE BERGER'S REPORT BEFORE US", ALTHOUGH NOTING THAT IN ANY CASE THE GOVERNMENT CANNOT PROCEED UNLESS THERE HAS BEEN A POSITIVE DECISION BY THE NATIONAL ENERGY BOARD ON THIS PARTICULAR SUBJECT (I.E., THE PIPELINE).

4. LOCAL PRESS COMMENTARY AND NDP SPOKESMEN IN PARTICULAR ARE INCREASINGLY INFERRING PUBLICLY THAT THE BERGER COMMISSION IS A "SOP" TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN ORDER TO PACIFY THE OPPOSITION TO THE PIPELINE AND A "FARCE" BECAUSE THE GOC INTENDS TO PROCEED WITH THE PIPELINE IF THE ENGINEERING, SUPPLY AND DEMAND ASPECTS ARE FAVORABLE AND CONSIDERS SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND OTHER ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES TO BE IN THE CATEGORY OF IRRELEVANT DATA. PORTER

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